FREE

TAHITI SPORTS

JANUARY - MARCH 2019

row row row your boat

make a yutu-ready **tuna bowl**

tony ichiuo proves himself wrong

no need to change your **diet** this new year

where is ping-pong champ **jean shi** now?

2019 SPORTS CALENDAR

JANUARY

Commonwealth Coalition of Private Schools Association Volleyball League: Volleyball games featuring high school teams resume after the holiday break.

IT&E 3rd Saipan Duathlon and Sprint Triathlon: This event will kick off the three-part Road to Tagaman Race Series

FEBRUARY

2019 NMIFA Spring Youth League: Soccer action begins this season with Northern Mariana Islands Football Association holding competitions for both boys and girls youth teams.

4th Saipan Aquathlon and 1K Run Race: The second leg of the Road to Tagaman Race Series will still be held at Paupau Beach.

2019 Coconut Tennis Classic: Northern Mariana Islands Tennis Association's first offering for the 2018-2019 season after Super Typhoon Yutu forced the cancellation of the TanHoldings Tennis Classic.

MARCH

Tagaman Triathlon: The longest-running triathlon event in the Western Pacific will have its 30th edition.

M-League: The CNMI's premier tournament in men's and women's soccer will return to the pitch for the spring season.

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The people behind TAGA *Sports* and *Saipan Tribune* pose for a photo in one of the group's gatherings last year at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan.

It's a new year. Truism also demands a new you, but Dre de los Santos says that's not necessarily true. In this edition, he explains why you shouldn't change your diet in the new year.

Dre says the struggle against premature burnout is real. Even the world's favorite Star Lord, Chris Pratt, admits to lying low on his workouts and staying away from the gym over the holidays. He says he's not just been motivated enough. How much more for us mere mortals?

The Bacchanalia that is the holiday season usually creates feelings of guilt and regret in the months after, which explains why there is usually a huge spike in the number of people hitting the gym in January and February—in a valiant attempt to get rid of all the fat and extra pounds gained over November and December. To do that, Dre is here to tell you that that there is no witchcraft involved; you just have to get going. Also, dieting can be useful, he says, but "if it's not in line with your goal, it's not going to end well."

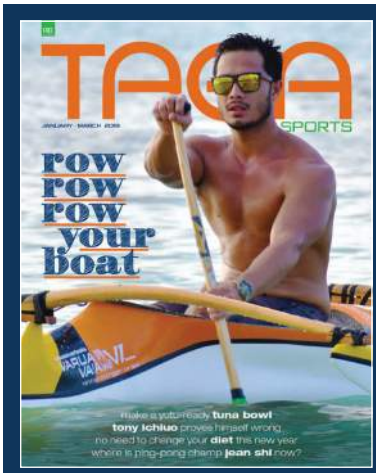
Our contributor, Bea Cabrera, sat down with Chris Concepcion to talk about diving. And since Chris is also the managing director of the Marianas Visitors Authority, they talked about diving in the Marianas.

In other areas, diving means swimming through floating plastic garbage to get to the clear part of the ocean and exploring reefs also means stumbling over used tires and plastic beverage rings. That's not the case here. At most, diving means seeing remnants of World War II like a sunken airplane. The clarity of the water in the CNMI makes small boats seems like they're floating on air. It can't be said enough—we live in a nearly untouched corner of the globe and we need to fiercely protect that corner if we don't want to destroy it.

As always, we welcome any feedback, story ideas, criticisms, corrections, etc. Just email them to editor@saipantribune.com and we will be sure to find space for them.

Sinseramente,

JAYVEE VALLEJERA
editor@saipantribune.com
Managing Editor



COVER ART

The Northern Marianas Paddle Sports Federation wants to promote the use of the one-man rudderless canoe to encourage more people to get involved in outrigger canoeing.

Photography by
ROSELYN B. MONROYO

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WRITER'S BLOC

BEACABRERA
Bea Cabrera is a two-time Crossfit competitor in the Philippines. Lifting weights and being active have become part of her lifestyle. She continues to do Crossfit workouts with her husband in their home gym every day and, although she is not looking at joining competitions in the near future, she believes that "fitness," no matter how simple or intense, can be done by anyone at any age.

DREDELOS SANTOS
Dre Delos Santos, a Mount Carmel School alumnus, earned his bachelor's degree in Kinesiology at the University of Hawaii and now runs his own fitness business as a certified strength coach in Honolulu. After years of helping people look and feel good in Hawaii, Dre is ready to return home this summer.

MAMIIKEDA
Mami Ikeda considers herself a daughter of the Koto Restaurant that was ran by her late parents in Susupe back in the late '70s to early '80s. A member of disaster relief team C.O.R.E. and the Commonwealth Racing Federation, and an advocate for the Commonwealth Cancer Association, Mami loves being a crazy cat mom and herb gardening. To reach her, email mami96950@gmail.com.

KIMBERLYBAUTISTA
Kimberly Bautista is the youngest in the pack of TAGA *Sports* writers. Kimberly currently covers all crime-related beats for the *Saipan Tribune*. She is always on the lookout for great deals, though not so much with sports stuff but, in this issue, she does get to find great prices on sporting items.

ROSELYNMONROYO
After learning how Tony Ichiuo went down to 155 lbs from 240 lbs, Roselyn knows there's still hope for her to lose weight. Nope, she's not running 10 miles a day. She is taking baby steps—walking along Beach Road after work.

JONPEREZ
From exclusively covering sports, Jon Perez now covers the Capitol Hill and political beats of the *Saipan Tribune* and is in charge of the YoungStyle section of the newspaper. He still hopes to take up a post-graduate course to someday teach journalism.

MARKRABAGO
Mark Rabago's only flirtation with ping-pong was when he played with co-workers every lunchtime at the third floor of the JP Center more than a decade ago. His thoughts about the game: Make the ball bigger and the table wider.

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Tuna-Mayo Bowl

MAMIIKEDA
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

A Happy New Year! Months after the devastation of Super Typhoon Yutu, so many people are still without power and water, so I decided to do a Yutu-friendly recipe this time! No butane needed. The main ingredients are either what's in a lot of the relief packages, or what you already have. Even if you don't have them handy and you already finished your DNAP (disaster food stamps), this recipe is still very affordable. Quick, easy, but yummy. Enjoy! (Excuse my dark photos. I still didn't have power when I was writing this!)

Ingredients
(1 serving)

- **1 bowl of rice** (I used a mix of brown rice—the microwavable one)
- **1 can of tuna** (I used tuna in water, which is what I always stock at home)
- **2-3 sheets of Korean seasoned seaweed laver** (can be Japanese)
- **Soy sauce**
- **Mayonnaise**

Drain the oil or water from the can of tuna and place the entire contents of the can—or half—on top of the rice. **Special tip:** Try sandwiching a few sheets of seaweed lavers when you put rice in a bowl. It's like heaven when you dig in!

Pour soy sauce over the tuna (Don't be shy. You want it to reach not only the bottom of the mountain of tuna, but also the rice), then put the mayonnaise on top (however much you like).
***Pika* tip:** Make a spicy mayo by mixing chopped donni or crushed red pepper, with a pinch of *Hondashi* to the regular mayo :)

Crush seaweed lavers with your hands, and top the bowl. Dig in!

WHERE TO GET

- **Microwavable steamed rice:** Any Chinese/Korean store, at $1.49-1.69/pack
- **Korean seasoned seaweed lavers:** Any Chinese/Korean store, at $1.45/pack
- **Western Family Premium Chunk Light Tuna in water:** Joeten store, at $1.69/can

Healthy choices
Spanish Egg-White Omelet
311 Calories
A primary egg-white omelet stuffed with a tasty vegetarian selection of red and green bell pepper, bean sprout, tomato strips, sliced mushroom and onions. Served with wheat toast.
BIBA
Celebrate your health!
Grilled Mahi-Mahi Sandwich
Grilled mahi-mahi fillet on a whole wheat bun topped with salsa or Dijon mustard. Served with a side of green salad.
360 Calories
Grilled Chicken Sandwich
431 Calories
Grilled chicken on a whole wheat bun topped with a salsa or Dijon mustard. Served with a side of salad.
Shrimp Kelaguen
Shrimp sautéed in coconut milk, ginger, and hot pepper mixed with fresh grated coconut. Served with lettuce.
400 Calories
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Note: Please advice your server of any food allergies or ingredient concern. Thank you!

affordable healthy food ideas

RASHAALI
USA Today

Trying to save money while eating healthy may seem like a Catch-22, especially when it's the holiday season, but it's easier than you might think.

With planning, by adding more plant-based options and with a few ideas to stock your fridge, you can cut down on your grocery bill and trips to the store.

Neal Barnard, author of *The Vegan Starter Kit* and founder of Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, says that eating cheap and healthy food is one of the best things you can do as plant-based foods are both healthy and usually the most affordable.

Marisa Moore, a registered dietitian »

nutritionist in Atlanta and former employee of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, says that once you get comfortable with planning meals and building a regular routine, eating healthy can be affordable.

"Convenience often costs more. Eating healthy doesn't have to be expensive, it just takes a little time and planning," Moore said.

Barnard suggests shopping in bulk and meal planning to avoid wasting food.

We asked Barnard and Moore to help us compile a few affordable healthy food items to stock your fridge.

Note: Although the term healthy differs from person to person and depends on your specific dietary needs, for the purposes of these recommendations, healthy foods are whole foods that are low in unhealthy fats, packed with vitamins and minerals, and offer significant nutritional benefits.

Try these budget-friendly foods:

Brown rice

One serving of rice can cost you as little as 9 cents and is rich with B vitamins and other healthy nutrients, Barnard said. Brown rice can be eaten alone, or you can use it as a base for other foods—get creative with some day-old rice by adding some frozen vegetables and an egg for protein, and now you have fried rice.

Whole chicken

A pound of chicken averages $1.28 a pound, and Moore says you can use this as your main protein source for meals. You can shred the chicken for a salad or have it with a side of your brown rice.

Ground turkey or chicken

Ground turkey can cost as little as $3. Some change per pound, and the options for meals are endless. Add some ground turkey to your sweet potato bowl or make chili, tacos or lettuce wraps.

Sweet potatoes

Sweet potatoes can go for about a dollar a pound if purchased in bulk, Barnard said. You can use them to make sweet potato fries in the oven, mashed sweet potatoes or even roasted sweet potatoes. Other than being full of beta carotene, which helps fight disease and boost your immune system, sweet potatoes are a complex carbohydrate and low on the glycemic index, so they won't spike your blood sugar.

Throw in your brown rice and beans and chop up some vegetables and you have a hearty and healthy sweet potato bowl.

Beans

A bag of dry beans, pinto, black, kidney or even lentils can give you 11 servings for about $1.39 or less. Beans are also very versatile and can be used in making salads, tacos, bean burgers and chili. The legumes are filled with protein and are full of fiber, Barnard says.

Oats

You can get 13 servings of oats for about $2.50. Oatmeal doesn't just have to be a breakfast food either; you can make sweet and savory oats. Barnard suggests getting creative by adding different fruits or other toppings and spices.

Fruits and vegetables

Both Moore and Bernard suggest buying fruit and vegetables that are in season, as they will be cheaper than those that aren't. Picking up frozen fruits and veggies is also a great idea and just as healthy as the nonfrozen kind. Fruits and veggies can be eaten as a snack or added into meals such as oatmeal or burritos to spice them up.

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why you shouldn't change your diet in the new year

Everyone this time of the year is talking about one thing: getting fit. And chances are you've been around this block a couple times.

I get it—new year, new me. Whether you nitpick a certain picture and notice how flabby your arms have gotten, or your significant other pats you on your stomach indicating the extra baggage, you're determined to make a change.

The sad part is you will likely fail—yet again.

You tell yourself it's going to be different, but no matter how many times you drill it into your head, the outcome is always the same. Barring catastrophic, life-altering circumstances, premature burnout is what typically ensues—and you're left with no meaningful changes in your health or body composition.

How to get it right this time

First things first, all diets work because they all generally speak the same language. They prompt you to move more, eat less. If it goes against those basic principles, it's complete rubbish. Once you understand that there is no witchcraft involved, you're on your way.

But let's pretend for a moment you're a complete beginner, and your colleague directs you to a new diet that's helped him lose 20 lbs. You're intrigued, and hop on it without question.

A few days in, you notice some changes. Your mood and energy improve. Perhaps a few lbs. here and there, but nothing eye-opening. A month into it, and your inner dialogue starts to take over. For whatever reason, you've changed your mind and decided to put things on hold. I've been around long enough to see how this plays out, and it's not pretty.

Varying levels of restriction can be useful. But if it's not in line with your goal, it's not going to end well. Moreover, when you factor in other competing demands, it may be impractical in your current juncture.

What if I said you can get fit without having to overhaul your diet?

Eat for What You're Going to Be Doing

In the previous issue, I mentioned at the outset that nutrition is absurdly simple. And, it truly is. But with so much information all over the place, it's extremely difficult to discern what's practical and what's...well…plain dumb.

Here's my philosophy: eat according to your goals and level of activity. It doesn't get any simpler than that. Given the fact that everybody responds his or her own way, the trick is striking an appropriate balance and living with the results.

For instance, if all you did the entire day was run your mouth and scroll through your social media feed, adding extra servings of your favorite food isn't the apocalypse. But it sure isn't going to bode particularly well for what you're trying to obtain.

Bottom line is, save the large-sized meals for days you expend a ton of energy. You don't need to concern yourself with details such as meal frequency and timing. Are smaller meals throughout the day going to stoke my metabolism? Is eating past six in the evening really going to make you gain weight?

Just stop it already. Please. All of that has been refuted, and is unlikely to account for any greater benefit. I'll admit, having more precision will be favorable for expediting results, but in this situation you don't have to be perfect. You just have to get it going.

Painfully Obvious: Avoid Buying Junk

Buying a box of cookies or a bag of chips thinking you're only going to have a bite never happens. And for a guy like me, I find a good deal of comfort resorting to fresh baked cookies or a slice of cheesecake. It can go south real fast if you've got Netflix turned on, too.

If it's in close proximity it will get eaten, or in my case, magically disappear. So next time you're shopping for groceries, don't buy junk. Get rid of the crap around your house. Addition by subtraction. A simple strategy such as this can be highly effective at controlling your overall calories.

DREDELOS SANTOS
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

ELEINA SANTOS

MARK RABAGO
Associate Editor

Eleina Santos recently won the 34th Annual Mt. Tapochao Turkey Trot Run but she's no novice in the running scene. She uses the sport to cross-train for her favorite sport, which is basketball, and used to be in the track team before moving back home from Oregon.

The daughter of many-time CNMI Men's National Basketball Team member John Santos could give any runner a run for her money, even though running is not exactly her cup of tea.

TAGA *Sports* caught up with the 25-year-old multi-sport protégé, who is also a member of the CNMI Women's National Track and Field Team, and she gamely gave away her secrets in training and keeping fit.

How did you got into running?

I was raised on Tinian and my parents were avid runners throughout my childhood. So, I would go running with them. My dad is "Faceman" so, of course, I played a lot of basketball growing up and conditioning. Running was a part of my basketball training as a youth.

How do you motivate yourself to run?

I just listen to a lot of rap music and I'm ready to run or work out. Coffee or a caffeinated pre-workout supplement helps when I'm up early to run or exercise.

Where are your favorite running spots on island?

I normally run on the Saipan Beach Road Pathway, but earlier this year I had to do a lot of running on the [Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium] track to prepare for the Micro Games.

How often do you run in a week and how long?

I don't run as often now but, as I mentioned earlier, I was preparing for the Micro Games since December or January and I was working out five or six times a week for six to seven months. I would condition on the track with the athletes, then go to basketball practice and/or lift weights.

Running. In the morning or evening?

I would rather exercise in the morning as I see it as giving me a productive start to my day.

Do you eat before or after?

If it's an early morning run or work out, I normally don't eat. If the workout or a basketball game is in the evening, then I will eat a few hours beforehand. It doesn't need to be anything special. Vegetables and protein will do.

What's your pre-run meal/snack? What's your post-run meal/snack?

Lots of servings of vegetables, chicken or beef, and beans or rice is an ideal post-workout meal for me. I'm a simple eater and I don't like cooking that much so I just try to structure my meals around veggies, protein, and a complex carbohydrate or rice, depending on what I did or what I need to do.

How long is a short run for you? How about a long run?

The longest race that I have ever ran is a 3,000-meter race. I ran that as a sophomore in high school in Oregon and it wasn't what I would call "fun." I quit track after that season. I decided to run again this year for the Oceania championships and then asked to join the track team for Micro Games because I wanted to improve my conditioning for basketball and challenge myself. The shortest event that I have ran is the 4x100-meter relay with Rachel Abrams, Zari Sapong, and Jaime Pangelinan. We got a bronze medal in that event.

How do you keep yourself hydrated during a run?

Water is fine. I love Gatorade but I try to only drink those during my basketball games.

Do you stretch before and after a run?

I don't like taking too much time to warm up. But before a track workout I loosen my hips with mobility drills and stretches for the hip flexors. When training with the track team, we did running drills and a few 100-meter strides before a workout, but I listen to my body and will warm up with other full body mobility drills or simple bodyweight exercises. To end on the question, warming up helps prepare my body for the exercise and may help prevent injury.

What are your preferred running shoes and apparel?

I usually run in the Nike Pegasus. It's comfortable and one of the more affordable running models of Nike shoes.

Do you run with any gadgets?

When I run recreationally I like to listen to music, so I will have my [smart]phone with me.

What's better: Running alone or with a running mate?

I usually exercise by myself. But I do enjoy working out with the track team. Running is hard. But when I'm with my teammates they motivate me by challenging me through being competitive or providing encouraging words and actions that help me get through.

Why do you like running?

Running is not my favorite exercise. But I am grateful for the coaching and the opportunities that I have gotten this year through running competitively (in the Oceania Championships here in June to the Micro Games in July). I chose to compete in track so that I can step out of my comfort zone and challenge myself. What I have learned about myself through tough, purposeful training is the most rewarding aspect of running competitively in the Oceania and Micro Games.

Any tips for aspiring runners out there?

If you love running, or whatever sport or activity you're in to, keep doing it and find ways to enjoy and challenge yourself. TS

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Hot deals on sporting needs

KIMBERLY A. BAUTISTA
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

The Hot Deals store in Garapan started small, just a little project of Arthur Miron.

"It was just a little project for me, something extra. Little by little I saw that it could go somewhere…

"Later, it got to the point where I was, like, 'You know what, I think I need to make this full time' so I did it…and I told myself, 'Let's just see how this goes, let's make this full time' so we put the pedal to the metal and poof, we filled it up and now, we need a bigger space," he said.

Miron believes the amazing deals that Hot Deals offers propelled its evolution from a hole-in-the-wall, family-owned electronics shop into one of the most visited sporting goods stores on Saipan.

According to Miron, he strives to offer high-end active wear at a reasonable—sometimes even at an incredibly low—price, and tries to make sure their prices are competitive—"as in on-island competitive."

"I try to offer the best prices on island," he added.

In fact, the store has an unofficial price-match guarantee. Miron said the public can message him through the Hot Deals official Facebook page if his prices do not match other vendors.

"They are free to message me. If someone wants to message me, like, 'Oh, your prices are a little high compared to another store,' what I will do is I'll drop my price it if it's true," he said.

Hot Deals offers a diverse sporting collection from popular brand names like Nike, Under Armour, Vans, and more. The store carries footwear, athletic clothing, balls, bags, and even headgear.

Miron said the shop is a project that turned into something bigger than he even imagined. Today, he operates it with his wife and their children.

Miron said he shifted from selling electronic products in 2013 into sporting goods because he found that there were a lot of things he liked that weren't available on Saipan and he thought others would want them too.

"I started about five years ago. …It was mainly electronics…mostly cell phones, phone cases, laptops, things I couldn't find in other places. …One day we were doing shopping for all our clothes and I was, like, 'I can't find the stuff that I want.' It's really hard to find the guy stuff…so I started bringing in those stuff. I started bringing in shoes, then I started bringing in the clothes, some shirts, some pants; anything I thought looked cool. …There was a lot of stuff that I saw that we didn't have here and I thought maybe I could be the one that fills in the gap."

Miron also had a love for basketball as a child and then grew into running in his teen years.

"I loved being active. I did play basketball with my friends. Almost every afternoon we would be at the Garapan court. …This was back when I was in elementary. …I used to love running, too. In high school my friends and I would go running and eat at McDonald's afterwards," he said.

Hot Deals is open everyday from 12pm to 9pm.

The Hot Deals Saipan Facebook page is also updated regularly and customers can look up available items and prices there.

KIMBERLY BAUTISTA

2

KIMBERLY BAUTISTA

3

1 Hot Deals offers the most stylish hat brands at affordable prices.

2 Hot Deals owner Arthur Miron beams with pride as he stands in front of his once little tech store that has blossomed into a staple athletic shop in the heart of Saipan.

3 At Hot Deals, you'll find shoes from athletic brands such as Under Armour, Nike, and even Vans.

HOT Deals Saipan

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No child shall be enrolled in any public or private school within the Commonwealth unless evidence is presented to the enrolling officer that the child has had all required vaccinations or immunizations: Public Law 6-10

HEALTH CERTIFICATES

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands No. 2150
Department of Public Health
Division of Public Health
Telephone: (670) 234-8950
EXPIRES ON
A SCHOOL ENTRANCE HEALTH CERTIFICATE
THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT
LAST FIRST MI
DATE OF BIRTH HOSPITAL NO.
VILLAGE / ISLAND NAME OF SCHOOL
has received all the required vaccines specified by the Department of Public Health and found free of active communicable diseases.
DEPUTY SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC HEALTH ADMINISTRATION DATE
SECRETARY OF HEALTH DATE

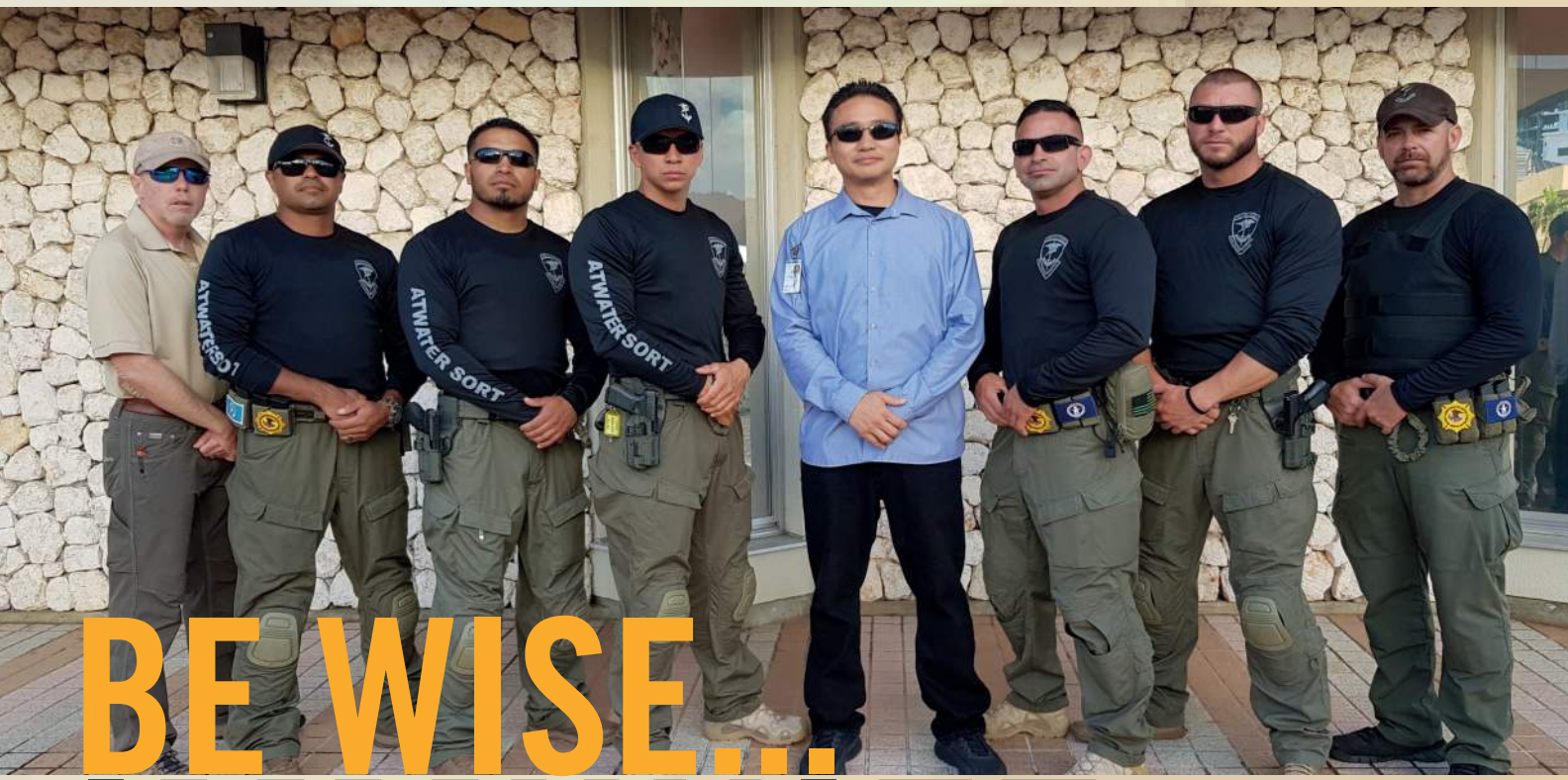
Any person who desires to work in, or attend, a school/child care facility shall be physically examined by the Department of Public Health or a licensed physician in private practice and shall be issued a health certificate stating that the applicant employee or student is free of pathogens and parasites and other forms of communicable diseases under PL 6-10 § 1 (§1560)

IMMUNIZATIONS

Every parent of a child already enrolled in a Commonwealth school, public or non-public, whose child's health records show incomplete immunizations, shall be required to initiate remedial action within two weeks following notification of the immunization deficiency. Failure to comply shall be grounds for suspension of the child from school until immunization standards have been met. Source: PL 6-10 § 1 (§1560).

A DISEASE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT EVERYWHERE

EVERYONE NEEDS PROTECTION



BE WISE... IMMUNIZE.

For more information contact the CHCC's Immunization Program:

Saipan: 236-8745 | Tinian: 433-9233 | Rota: 532-9457

or visit **www.cdc.gov.vaccines**

Gross eyes revamping PSS athletics program

JONPEREZ
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

Nick Gross is looking to start fresh with the athletics program of the CNMI Public School System.

With Super Typhoon Yutu disrupting almost all sports events on Saipan and Tinian, Gross believes he has more time to plan and study how the new sports calendar would look like.

Saipan's sports facilities, especially at the Oleai Sports Complex in Susupe, were destroyed when Yutu pounded Saipan in the last week of October.

Saipan and Tinian are still recovering from Yutu's devastating winds; the southern island of Rota is still returning to normalcy after being pummeled by Typhoon Mangkhut in September last year.

Debris cleanup is almost done at the sports complex but repairs could take more than a year due to the extent of the damage.

"As recovery efforts continue throughout the CNMI, the PSS Athletic Program Department is working on revamping its initial school year athletic opportunities. Unfortunately, many of the sporting venues throughout the CNMI have sustained damage and are awaiting repairs," Gross told TAGA *Sports*.

He said the department hopes to be able to

HIROYUKI MORI

Nick Gross not only organizes sports competitions, but also competes in them. He joined the javelin throw event in last year's Micronesian Games in Yap.

offer basketball to boys and girls high school and elementary in January and February "but we are currently unable to identify a safe, accessible venue to host the events."

He believes, though, that, as the PSS Athletics Department grows and the recovery of the islands' sporting infrastructure takes place, this could open up opportunities for the expansion of sporting events for all students. "Ideally, we will be able to offer a wide range of sports to all CNMI students. Through these meaningful athletic opportunities, our community will become a healthier place for all."

His department is now working with the NMI Rollers so they could help in some of the events that could be held at the Koblerville Gymnasium near Coral Ocean Point Golf & Resort. The facility, however, is also waiting for its floor to be repaired.

Gross, nevertheless, said that they plan to change the format of interscholastic basketball in the form of moving away from a full court 5x5, to allow using a modified version of 3x3 half-court games at the high school level and 4x4 at the elementary level.

"This will allow for more participation overall and faster paced games. Ideally, all of the competitions will take place on Saturdays as scheduling after-school activities with PSS' current schedules are nearly impossible," he said.

They are also in talks with the outrigger canoe community to have a high school season that is planned to be held in the first quarter of the year and have separate grass and indoor volleyball tournaments while finishing the school year with athletics.

"While the high school and elementary school kids are getting their basketball fix, the middle school students (both male and female) will get their opportunity to play modified grass volleyball in a 4x4 format. [Our] department will be working closely with the Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association for these events."

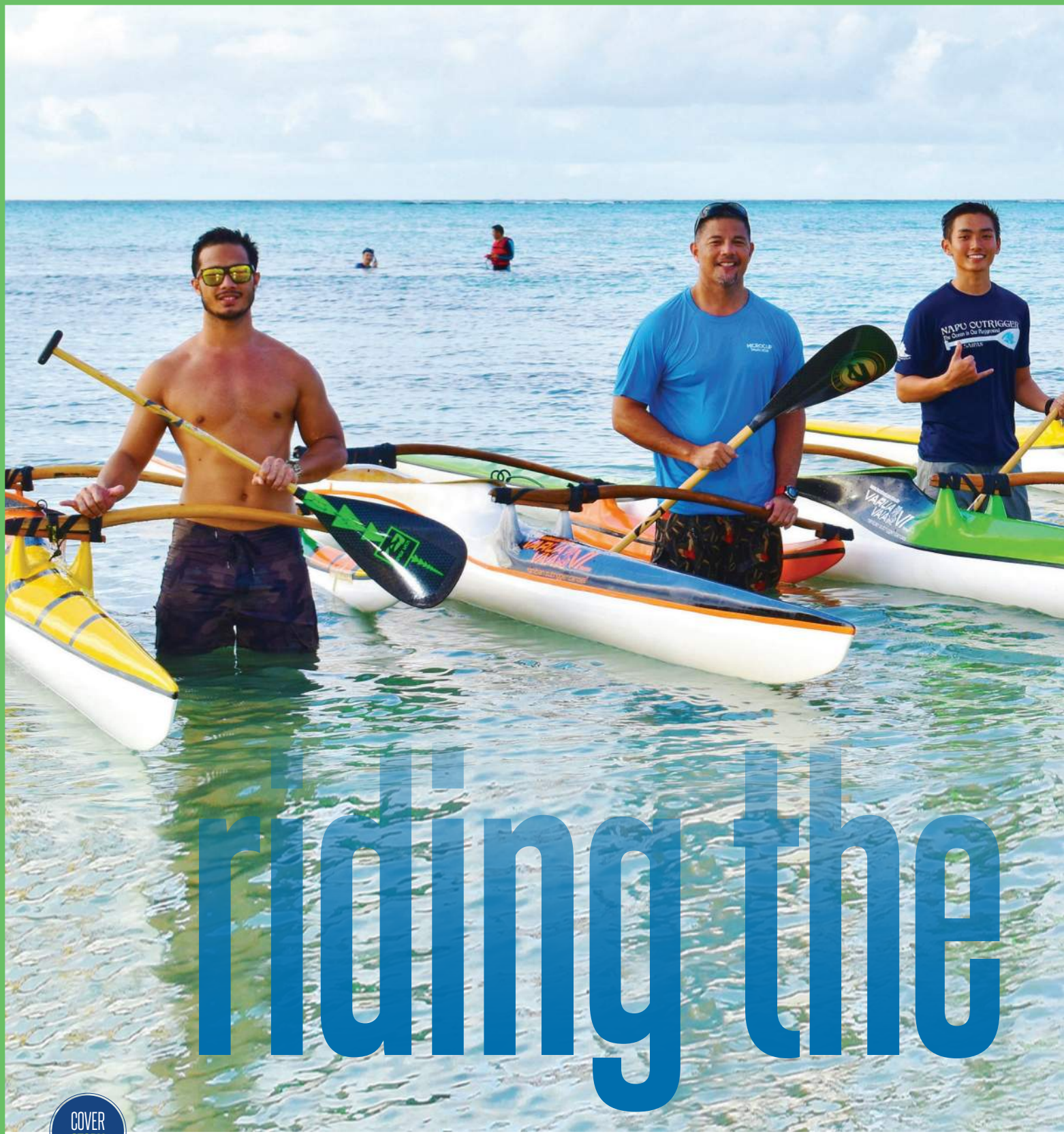
"To finish out the school year, we are anticipating another successful All Schools Track and Field season, working hand-in-hand with Northern Mariana Athletics and their longtime partner, McDonald's. Hopefully, the [Marianas High School] gym will be back online…and we will be able to plan an indoor volleyball season for the high school boys during the months of March to May."

Gross said the goal is to provide athletic opportunities to all public school students.

Gross, who helped organize the first CNMI Disability Sports Festival last year, added that his department wants to create stronger partnerships with the Northern Marianas Sports Association and all of its member federations to help create a vital developmental grassroots program. "It is absolutely vital to the CNMI's development of athletes."

JON PEREZ

From left, first lady Diann Torres, Finance secretary Larrisa Larson, and Office of Grants Management administrator Epi Cabrera hand over the check donation to Public School System Athletic Program director Nick Gross and Northern Marianas Protection and Advocacy Systems Inc. executive director James Rayphand for the 2018 Disabled Sports Festival.

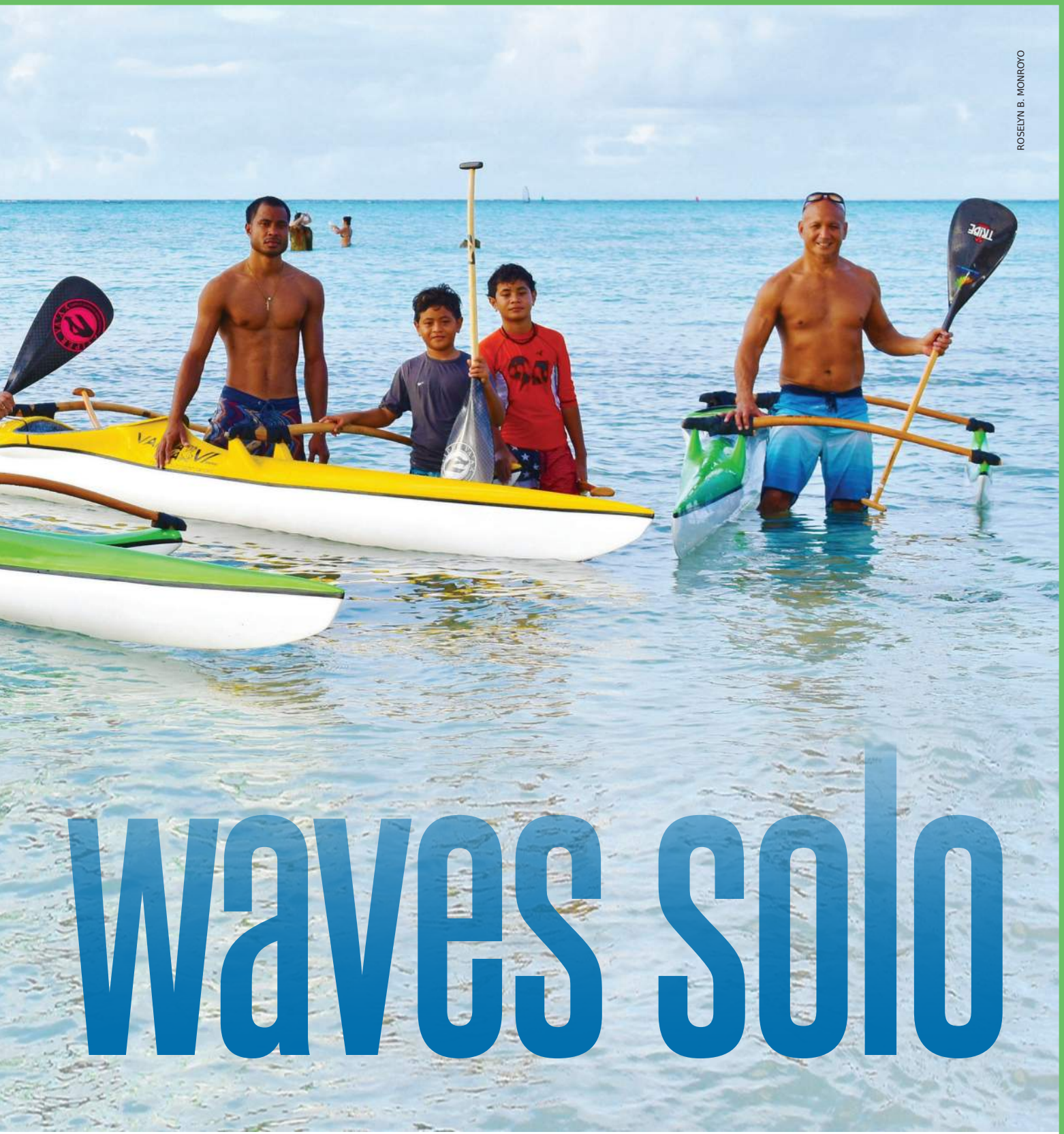


riding the

COVER STORY

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

The Saipan's lagoon is so scenic, so postcard-pretty, that picking up a paddle and heading west on a canoe to enjoy the view and the water is a near-constant temptation.



ROSELYN B. MONROYO

waves solo

However, there's a challenge. Majority of outrigger canoes on island are for a six-man crew and arranging for five more people to join your cruise would not be easy, especially if you're a newbie.

But don't give up just yet. You can still navigate the pristine Saipan waters using a one-man rudderless canoe, which the Northern Marianas Paddle Sports Federation aims to promote this season to encourage more people to get involved in outrigger canoeing.

The V1—the term used for the one-man canoe—would not only get you to your destination, but would also improve your paddling skills so fast that hooking up with the veterans in the sport to join their regular rides will not be as tough.

"This is the greatest way for each paddler »

Paddlers pose for a photo after completing a ride from Paupau Beach to Micro Beach.

Joshua Andrew steers the V1 to the Micro Beach shore.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

> If you want to try out one of these beautiful crafts, you would need to contact the paddler or check the clubs. It's recommended that one learn the basics of paddling by joining the team paddling crew on the six-man canoe first. All the clubs (Saipan Paddling Club, Marianas Outrigger Canoe Club, Napu Outrigger Canoe Club, Hoe Lokahi Canoe Club, Saipan Outrigger Canoe Club, and Marianas Pacific Paddlers) can be contacted via Facebook.
>
> —Justin Andrew, president, Northern Marianas Paddle Sports Federation

to improve her/his paddling skills. On a V1, it's just the paddler and the canoe and all the elements out there—the wind, ocean current, and ocean swells. You really feel how your paddle influences the canoe as well as the elements," said NMPSF president Justin Andrew.

In a one-man canoe, you are forced to learn how to respond to your paddle and work with the conditions. You can't rely on five other people—like the more common outrigger canoe—to do that for you.

"It's a teaching tool," said NMPSF vice president Dino Manning.

The only way to be good in the sport is to paddle and, if you do well in the one-man canoe, transitioning to the team event (six-man) will be much easier. "It's like cross training," Manning added.

Anyone can get on a one-man canoe, but some basic skills and safety tips should be considered to navigate the course and lessen, if not avoid, accidents.

"If you have never paddled before it will be a sure challenge since the paddler will need to learn to paddle and steer at the same time and this is not an easy thing to do," Andrew said.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Jason Tarkong leisurely paddles in the water off Micro Beach.

THINGS TO LEARN

Equipment needed

1. **Canoe:** The basic V1 on Saipan are individually owned and costs around $3,000 (minimum). You can hook up with members of different canoe clubs if you want to make arrangements and use one.

2. **Paddle:** Some stores on Saipan carry entry-level paddles made of carbon fiber. A standard paddle costs about $200. Andrew advises one to have an extra paddle.

3. **Hydration Unit**: You'll be out in the water for hours and steering and paddling under the searing heat is no joke, so hydration is a must to get you going. Basic hydration unit costs less than $100.

Andrew also advises paddlers to bring a **bailer** (to catch and remove water in the canoe); **rigging rubber or ropes** (for securing the canoe); and **life jackets**.

Basic skills

1. Know how to swim/float if the canoe capsizes.
2. Good/fair knowledge in paddling and steering.
3. Know how to rig a canoe.
4. Know how to deal with a capsized canoe.
5. Know how to read ocean conditions.

Safety rules

1. Have a paddling buddy.
2. Ensure all rigging is tight and safe.
3. Ensure an extra paddle is on hand.
4. Ensure a bailer is on the canoe.
5. Ensure you have extra rigging materials.
6. Bring an extra line just in case towing is needed.
7. Always have a personal flotation device on the canoe.
8. Ensure a route plan is given to someone on land.
9. Bring a radio or a cell phone in case of emergency.

Source: Justin Andrew, president, Northern Marianas Paddle Sports Federation

the silence under the waves

BEACABRERA
TAGA *Sports* Contributing Writer

Photo shows Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Chris Concepcion in the beautiful Rota Hole.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

> what made me fall in love with the sport was the freedom and privacy you feel when underwater

Chris Concepcion values the privacy that comes with diving.

"It's a stress reliever for me. I feel free and at ease underwater—no one can talk to you [and] you won't be bothered by other people."

That sense of being closed off and remote is what made Chris fall in love with scuba diving. His first full dive was at the Laulau Beach dive site "and what honestly made me fall in love with the sport was the freedom and privacy you feel when underwater."

What got him into diving, however, was when he became the managing director of the Marianas Visitors Authority. He already loved the sea but he believed that what would make him more effective at his job was to try as much tourist activities as possible in order to be able to speak from experience about things to do in the CNMI.

He pursued that by becoming a certified scuba diver in 2017. "I love the ocean and I wanted to experience it more, so I asked my buddy who owns Marine Quest if I could do a certification course with him and he said yes. The rest is history," he said.

That experience not only opened an entirely new world for him to explore and expanded his love for the ocean, but also made him aware of the need to take better care of the sea.

"I realized that our coral reefs are priceless. The marine life contained just here in the CNMI is immense and unique," he said. "I've seen tiny creatures, sharks, turtles, dolphins, and numerous other sea life just in and around our lagoon and it's amazing.. but I've also seen bleached corals, which is a reminder of how fragile and sensitive our reefs are."

With 40 dives in the CNMI under his belt, Concepcion still has favorite dive sites in the CNMI. That includes the Rota Hole because "it's a perfect example of how Mother Nature works wonders by carving a perfect hole off Rota's coast, creating a natural spotlight underneath the waves; and the the Naftan Point and Obyan Beach on Saipan because Naftan's underwater cliff is incredibly thrilling with its pitch-black edge, making it impossible to know what's really down there, and Obyan because of its perfect white sand and garden eels, which make it fun to explore."

Tinian's Dump Cove is another personal favorite "because of the many unexplored ordnance found underneath the cliff, reminders of the horrors of war inflicted on our people in 1944.

"My other favorites include the Grotto, Emily and Spotlight on Saipan, the Tinian Grotto, and the Shoun Maru and Coral Garden on Rota."

Yes, it is Concepcion's job to sell the CNMI as a tourist destination and he markets the CNMI as a place that offers some of the best dive sites in the world, so he knows first-hand the underwater attractions the Commonwealth offers.

"The coral reefs, the marine life, the underwater wrecks from World War II, the perfect temperature, the numerous dive sites that are easily accessible on all three islands, the numerous dive shop options available, the international clientele that frequent the CNMI for diving, the clean water, the safe environment—all of that make the CNMI a haven for scuba divers," he said.

Of course, he also yearns to dive in other places. "I'd love to dive in Yap, the Chuuk Lagoon, the Marshall Islands, Cebu, Bali, Maldives, Mexico, Palau, Thailand, and somewhere in the Caribbean," he said.

He sees himself diving for the rest of his life. "I wish I could dive once or twice a week but I can't due to my hectic schedule. For now, I make it a point to dive at least once a month as a stress reliever."

He encourages everyone who lives and visits the Marianas to try scuba diving at least once "because it's incredibly thrilling."

You don't have to be in the best of shape to scuba dive, Concepcion said, "but you definitely need to be quick, nimble, and full of energy in order to fully enjoy the experience."

For now, he sees the experience as a stress reliever, giving him a sense of peace and making him feel one with the earth and full of life. "The smell of salt water is something I crave," he added.

"Like good food, it heals, it's medicine for the mind, body and soul. It brings me back to my youth because I grew up on private beachfront property in Chalan Piao and being by the ocean brings back fond memories."

proving 'em wrong

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
TAGA *Sports* Staff Writer

When Tony Ichiuo was still in training more than two decades ago, he ran so often along the same path that he eventually carved out a track along the grassy field of the sports complex. Other runners soon followed suit and the track became a near-permanent sight at the complex.

That path speaks deeply of his dedication to the sport. Yet Ichiuo recalls that he nearly passed out when he first joined a local race.

"I ran the 400-meter [race] in Hopwood when I was 24 years old and heavy (over 200 lbs). I raced against younger and skinny guys and placed second with a time of 59 seconds-plus. After the race, coach Kurt (former Northern Marianas Athletics president Kurt Barnes) approached me and asked if I wanted to train and race for Team CNMI in the 1994 Micronesian Games in Guam. I said no because I nearly died after the race at Hopwood," Ichiuo said.

That's why he never thought about being in competitive racing, let alone representing the CNMI in regional and international tournaments and competing for nearly three decades.

"I didn't think I could do it. I started running late and was overweight, so I—and probably most of the people at Hopwood—had doubts if I can really run that fast."

Since then, Ichiuo, now a CNMI Sports Hall of Famer, has proven his doubters, including himself, wrong. He trained and made it to the CNMI national team, competing in off-island events from the early 1990s to the 2018 Micronesian Games in Yap.

Training religiously

Ichiuo got into running to get fit and unload a lot of extra weight. He was 240 lbs when he started and was down to 155 lbs by the time he raced at the 1994 Micronesia Games in Guam.

"I ran every day at the beach and at the sports complex when there was no track yet, just a pathway (along the grassy field with loose rocks) that I eventually created because I would always go there and run and so other runners used it too," he said.

The Kagman resident was so dedicated to training that, once, he nearly missed a sendoff for a family member.

"I lost track of time. Then I remembered that I asked to be picked up along the road and join my family's ride to the airport. I eventually had to run from Garapan to the airport to see off a family," Ichiuo said.

Tony was devoted to his training, that he went against Barnes' advice to take a break on Sundays.

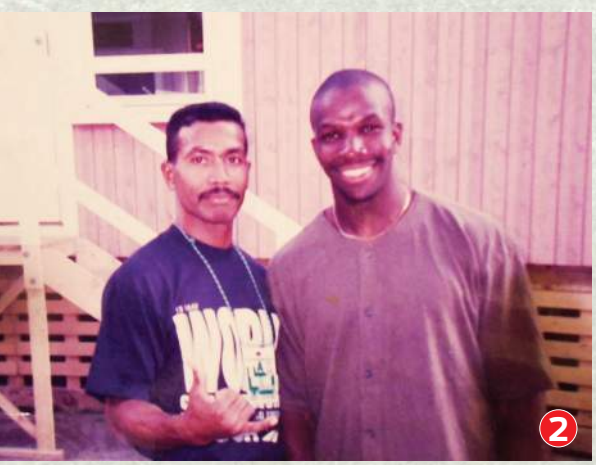
"Tony began to run on the roads to get in shape for what he deemed would be an attempt to be a bona fide track and field athlete. At that time, Tony was overweight but soon lost all of his unwanted body fat and had slimmed down to a very muscular athlete and with no weight training, just cardiovascular exercises. Tony started out running a mile a day and was soon up to 5 and 10 miles a day. He never took a day off and trained seven days a week," Barnes said.

"He's always an inspiration to everyone in what could be done when one put his mind to it. Others emulated his training," Barnes added.

Running around the world

Ichiuo's first stop was Vanuatu in 1993 and then Guam in 1994. He competed in the 400-meter run, topped his heat, and posted a national record in Guam.

"He set the CNMI record in the 400 meter (53 seconds) and earned a silver medal in both relays (4x100 and 4X400)," said Barnes, who coached Ichiuo in the regional event.



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1 Tony Ichiuo poses at the Oleai Sports Complex track and field facility.

2 Tony Ichiuo, left, poses with world and Olympic champion (100m run) Danovan Baily of Canada during the 1995 World Championships in Goteborg, Sweden.

3 Tony Ichiuo, far right, races in the 100m run of the 1993 Pacific Mini Games in Vanuatu.

4 Tony Ichiuo, right, poses with young runner and Tinian's Tyler Santos after competing in last year's Micronesian Games in Yap.

KURT BARNES

1

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

4

After the Guam tournament, Ichiuo, who also did 100-meter and 200-meter events, raced in Palau, Pohnpei, and Yap in the Micro Games; Vanuatu, Tahiti, and Guam in the Pacific Games; Australia (1999 and 2005) in the Oceania Athletics Championships; and in Sweden (1995 World Championship) and London (2003 World Indoor).

"Never in my life did I think that I would go to these places. Running/athletics made it possible for me to travel, meet athletes I only saw on TV or read about, and experience what it's like to be out there in the big stage, especially for someone who's representing a small island that a lot of people are not familiar with," he said.

Competing off-island also gave Ichiuo memories that make him smile.

"In Sweden, they thought Saipan is a place in Spain, so I had to explain to them where Saipan is. Also, they thought I am representing the U.S. and I am an African-American," he said.

"I was there, lining up against world-class runners and cameras were flashing. I am the new guy and so proud to represent the NMI and go against these stars. Almost everything was so surreal, starting when I got off the plane and saw someone holding a sign bearing the CNMI name, up to the catering area where you see these stars and somehow feel you belong in their group now," Ichiuo added.

One last run

At 53, Ichiuo is still fit, thanks to running and his work as a lifeguard on Managaha Island.

He may not be as competitive as he was 10 years ago, but he has no doubts he still has the legs to join a big event before hanging up his sneakers. In fact, Ichiuo still wants to race in the Masters World Championships.

"That' my ultimate goal before finally calling it quits," he said.

A worthy goal, indeed, for the runner who has made running his way of life. "I feel weak if I don't run in a day," he said. TS

JEAN SHI

MARK RABAGO
Associate Editor

In her prime, the mere mention of her name would send shivers down an opposing player's spine. That was how dominating Jean Shi was as a table tennis player, reigning over the table sport not only in the CNMI but the Pacific region for years.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jean Shi, right, now coaches a table tennis club in San Diego, California.

Together with other table tennis players, most of them other Chinese expatriates, Jean Shi brought back boatloads of gold medals to the CNMI. She was so excellent at table tennis—also called ping pong in Asia—that it probably led to citizenship being included in the eligibility rules of regional competitions.

Now 57 years old, the Shanghai native fondly looks back at the times when she wore the CNMI's colors in the Micronesian Games and Pacific Games.

"My fondest memories are the time the CNMI flag was raised and the CNMI national anthem was sung two times after I was standing on the platform as a women singles and mixed double champions. It's so impressive to represent the CNMI," she said in an email interview with TAGA *Sports*.

Aside from winning gold medals in the Micronesian Games and Pacific Games, Shi defeated all comers—men and women—in local and off-island tournaments during her more than two decades of living on Saipan.

Shi left Saipan for good in October 2018 after more than 25 years of making the island her home. She now lives in San Diego, together with the rest of her family.

"I left Saipan for Shanghai, my home in China, on Oct. 19, 2018, before I headed to San Diego, California. I then flew to Los Angeles on Nov. 1, 2018, to pick up my elder son and, together, we proceeded to San Diego where we reunited with the rest of the family," Shi said.

Shi, who graduated from the Shanghai Teachers University with a physical education degree, said her plans are to stay in San Diego until they find a better place to settle in. »

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Jean Shi shows off her singles, doubles, and mixed doubles gold medals in the 2006 Micronesian Games held on Saipan.

Jean Shi in action during one of the local tournaments on Saipan.

"I have a contract with the local district court as an interpreter of a private vendor for two years since 2017. It's the same job I had when I was on Saipan. At the same time, a school invited me to be its table tennis main coach to teach many kids. I will start next week (December 2018) if everything goes as planned," she said.

Shi left Saipan with a heavy heart after not being able to represent the CNMI one last time during the 2018 Micronesian Games in Yap.

"The saddest thing is that I couldn't represent the CNMI to play at the 9th Micronesia Game in Yap at the end of July 2018 and that's after I changed my initial plan to leave the island from May to June. I came back just for the Games in the beginning of July and I then I read in the newspaper that the table tennis association officially called off our participation right after I arrived on Saipan," she said.

Shi said the CNMI table tennis national team was supposed to win at least four gold medals in the Games.

"The most important thing that should've happened was the CNMI flag could've been raised four times during the table tennis competitions of the 2018 Micronesian Games in Yap. Just imagine the feeling. You would be so proud as a CNMI representative when the flag is raised. We made our efforts to see if the association would change its mind or the officials would be changed, but both failed, though," she said.

Before becoming a staple of table tennis tournaments on Saipan and abroad and a Chinese translator for the local courts, Shi was a grocery store owner in San Antonio.

"Opening a small grocery store in San Antonio for about four years, I was hired by a group of Chinese workers, non-English speakers, to do the first official translation at the local [Department of] Labor in 1997. From then on, I became a translator for most labor cases and occasionally did translation work at the court until 2007 due to the garment factories' closure," she said.

There is nothing pedestrian about Shi when it comes to ping-pong, however. She first picked up a ping-pong paddle at a very young age and started playing competitively in fifth grade soon after being named to the district age group team in Shanghai.

Shi was a mainstay of her elementary and middle school (junior high) varsity teams and starred for No. 2-ranked Shanghai Teachers University, where she won the singles championship in the early 1980s.

In all, Shi won six district championships and, at one time, was seeded sixth in singles in the whole of Shanghai.

A year after arriving on island in 1994, Shi became bored with just tending to her grocery store. That's when she decided to pick up a paddleboard again.

"I first came to Saipan in July 1993 and played table tennis and defeated all men's players, including Guam players, in 1994," she recalls.

Despite having resettled in the U.S. mainland, Shi still longs for her table tennis teammates on island and has kind words for those just picking up the sport.

"I really miss my ping-pong friends who love ping-pong more than I do. For anyone starting in the sport, just hang in there and keep playing whenever you have a chance because ping-pong is one of the best sports. Good luck to everyone on Saipan!" she said.

Jean Shi poses with her fellow Marianas Amateur Table Tennis Association members and off-island players during a goodwill tournament.

With the new year comes **new battles**,
but with the same
dedication, **teamwork**, and
determination,
we will **get through** all these challenges.

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